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March 15, 1968

Mr. Daniel Ellsberg
The RAND Corporation
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Dear Dan:

I wonder how close this is to your reassessment.

I would be very grateful for anything you could do to put this into the discussion process at highest levels. The memorandum deals with matters of greatest urgency. I am sure you will feel it too optimistic, but do we agree on what has to be done?

I am sending copies to Walt Rostow, Alain Enthoven and Clark Clifford directly. I don't suppose Clifford will read his, however, unless somebody pushes it to him.

I would like to discuss this with you and am always available if I can be useful.

Sincerely,



Ithiel de Sola Pool

IdSP/fm

Enc.

ACHIEVING PACIFICATION IN VIET NAM

The Tet offensive has not yet been fully analyzed. It represents a new enemy strategy to respond to American successes against their previous strategy. The new enemy strategy will be continued, because it works, until such time as we change our strategy to provide an effective response. (The new situation is described in Memo #6 below.)

Success in Viet Nam is still possible. To achieve it the following things need to be done now:

1. Beef up the PF, give them the main RD mission, and make them the backbone of the government structure in the villages. (See Memo #1.)
2. Institute District Councils of village chiefs with powers. Create thus some self-government rising up from the village level. (See Memo #2.)
3. Beef up intelligence on the infrastructure and on local VC units. (See Memo #3.)
4. District advisors are the American key. They must speak Vietnamese. Teach them more about Vietnamese villages and how to do political and economic analysis of them. Pick them a year in advance to train them adequately. Keep the good ones for longer tours. (See Memo #4.)
5. Don't leave VC hamlets as a functioning base for the enemy. Develop a plan for converting, occupying, or resettling them. (See Memo #5.)
6. All the while continue the efforts to improve civil administration in Saigon, working towards a structure that can serve and respond to the field.

These conclusions arise from five months in Viet Nam over the past two years, seven Simulmatics studies in Viet Nam described in attachment #7, and a preliminary examination of the news reports on the Tet offensive and the post-Tet Simulmatics interviews.

Ithiel de Sola Pool
Center for International Studies
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BEEFING UP THE PF

There are an average of about 60 PF soldiers in every village in Viet Nam. Paid barely enough to survive, not issued uniforms, armed with old M2's or less, given little or no compensation if wounded or killed, they nonetheless have a better record in casualties inflicted on the enemy than ARVN. Although a start has been made now, they are still seldom trained beyond the most casual introduction on the job.

Most of these 150,000 to 175,000 men are poorly led. There is no higher organic level above the platoon, offering jobs to which a good leader can be promoted. Being platoon leader is a dead end. Most platoons are not aggressive against the VC, usually confining themselves to defending their own post and therefore not inhibiting VC infiltration even in their own village; but some platoons patrol and ambush aggressively.

PF unlike ARVN seldom abuse the villagers. They are living in their own home village, which is why they joined PF rather than ARVN, and their basic relations with their fellow villagers are good. On the other hand, in insecure areas they and their fellow villagers tend to avoid close contact with each other because the VC may penalize someone who associates too closely with the PF.

It is the thesis of this memo that the PF is the best potential instrument that the government has for establishing its authority in the populated areas of the countryside. It is by a large margin the largest number of government men in the villages.

Beefing up the PF in the least costly way to obtain the additional manpower needed in the populated countryside to meet the new post-Tet VC strategy. It is far less costly than adding men to ARVN or US Forces; it is also more effective. The PF are local boys who know and are trusted in their communities. The Simulmatics studies have shown that the only way to effectively organize Vietnamese villages is from the grass roots. The PF is a group that can be the basis of local political organization.

RD cadres should be used to provide auxiliary manpower where the PF need to be supplemented in priority locations.

To make the PF the backbone of a government structure running all the way through the country the following things need to be done:

1. Give them some sense of respect by giving them uniforms, decorations, insurance, visits.
2. Arm them to match the VC's firepower.

I am not so sure

3. Make them directly responsible to the village chief, not to any outside figure. This will enhance the status of the village chief, and give him the right to use them for village purposes other than defending their own post.
4. Establish a district and province level training and liason organization so as to provide career promotion opportunities for good leaders, as well as to train the men.
5. Give them explicit responsibility for an RD mission in their village. Unlike the RD teams they will be permanent, and they are local boys which in Viet Nam is crucial. The importance of their doing RD work is not just to win popularity. It is to bring them into the village life. Experience has shown that only this way do they get intelligence about the infrastructure and it is also essential if they are to become the political organizers of the village.
6. Encourage able young men to join the PF by narrowing the pay gap with ARVN.

*Introduce adult education for P.F. soldiers.
Special Radio - programme -
One or two month training by rotation
either in agriculture or village rural*

COUNCILS OF VILLAGE CHIEFS

Organizations in Viet Nam that have been successful in producing large scale or national integration have followed a common pattern. They rest their demand for loyalty at the level of the close face-to-face group such as the family or village or secret cell rather than seeking identification with a larger unit such as a national leadership. Then they have tied the leaders of the face-to-face groups together into a higher level personal grouping such as a provincial committee. The VC do this, so do the Hoa Hao, and virtually all successful organizations.

Elections of hamlet and village officials, held last spring, were very meaningful to the villagers. Many incumbents were defeated. Villagers in our interviews repeatedly said that now they felt that their hamlet and village chiefs were their representatives. In those villages where elections have been held, a sense of community was generated.

However, the interface of the village and the district governments is the interface between a grass roots meaningful organization and Mandarin authoritarianism. The district chief, an ARVN officer appointed from above, is in no way responsible to the village chiefs. If he calls them together occasionally it is to give orders. The elective local officials who in relation to their own people are representatives are simply subordinates in relation to the district chief.

That is no way to build up the authority of the village chiefs in their villages, nor to secure co-operation among villages in self-defense. The village is not strong enough to defend itself. As things stand now, the village, except where sect organizations unite the villages, feels little attachment to the district. Face-to-face co-operation of village chiefs for mutual defense could change this.

A council of village chiefs should be instituted with powers over districtwide matters such as local roads, the district town market, and medical facilities. They should also become a forum on security problems so as to create a situation in which the PF can hope to be supported from surrounding units if attacked and in which intelligence will be shared. In short, the council must be a real organization to which the district chief will listen, not a rubber stamp. What was accomplished by creating a civil government alongside of the military leadership at the national level can be repeated at the district level. That is the next step forward in building responsible government in Viet Nam that will command the people's loyalty.

recall of dist. chief

LOCAL INTELLIGENCE

In a war with an underground the crucial information needed is police intelligence on named individuals. They pass unnoticed through large military units. Good intelligence rather than larger forces brings victory.

1966 and 1967 saw enormous improvement in police intelligence on the infrastructure. The Tet offensive proved that there is still a long way to go. In the best districts there are completed files in Vietnamese and American hands on every individual in the VC leadership. That is rare. Usually no adequate informant networks have been developed, inadequate interrogation is done except for order of battle information, and the information that is collected is not processed rapidly enough in an easily accessible computerized system.

Our research experience indicates that surprising amounts and kinds of local data can be generated. A systems study should be done of needs and procedures for increasing the flow of police intelligence and all kinds of political, economic, and biographic information from and to the main district and local personnel.

THE DISTRICT ADVISORY TEAM

^{An} The absolute prerequisite for exerting influence in a political situation is the ability to hear what people say and to express oneself forcefully and fluently. It is extraordinary beyond belief that we are trying to pacify Viet Nam with no American in closer contact with the situation than a district advisor who only speaks English. It cannot be done. The British in Malaya insisted on having an Englishman who spoke the vernacular in every village in which they worked.

Our grass roots influence in Viet Nam is exerted by 500 officers in the 250 district advisory teams. These are the most important Americans in Viet Nam. These are the Americans in close touch with the 2500 villages and 15,000 hamlets. The province advisors are in contact with only a few of them. The British were able to mobilize 200 Chinese speaking Britishers to place in the Malayan villages. It is essential that we put 500 Vietnamese speaking officers at the district level. 7 No

To do this will take a year's lead time. 1000 officers will have to be picked this year, 500 for the field immediately, 500 for training for 12 months. From then on the numbers return to normal.

In addition to language these officers need to be trained for social and economic action in Vietnamese villages. The good ones now do a fine job of military advising. In addition they have been taught to do a job for USAID and CORDS in checking on RD supplies and performance. They have not been trained for the rest of their duties, which are primarily civil. They seldom know much about the state of local markets, the identity of influential citizens, the factions into which the citizens are divided--in short the substance of local politics on which the Viet Cong builds. They are intelligent men and can be trained to find out about these things too. Civilians on the teams are useful, but they need the same training. It should not be assumed that civilians automatically know how to function in rural Viet Nam.

UNDERCUT VC VILLAGE CONTROL

One viewpoint is that in the weakened situation we face since Tet we should concentrate all our efforts on the blue areas. Its proponents say, build where we have strength, in the cities and towns and A and B level hamlets. That view is too simple. *Who?*

Viet Cong operations in the populated countryside are made possible by the network of havens that their hamlets give them. We cannot afford to allow them to consolidate their hold on these hamlets. In the checkerboard pattern of control that has existed, no government hamlet could be fully secured while there were VC hamlets three or four miles away. Thus while we concentrate effort on areas with a substantial block of government population, still their neighboring VC centers have to be pacified too. *simultaneously?!*

Most people in a VC hamlet differ little from those in a government hamlet. Most are not pro-VC. If the hamlet can be occupied and secured, those found in it will be pro-government. Where securing is not possible and the population is moved, a boomerang effect is probable if the resettlement is not well planned. *!*

Inhabitants leaving a VC village can easily be provided with a better village than that they left. It is seldom done. Poor planning usually deposits refugees in places where there are either no fields or no water or no house sites. All three must be ready before the refugees are moved. There is plenty of land in Viet Nam to make this possible. The Corps of Engineers is well capable of developing settlements in advance of movement of population. Ben Suc's are not necessary. *Ben Suc? only provable*

Well designed resettlement areas are good psychological warfare, provide a populated shield for pacified areas, cut off the VC from manpower and logistics, and increase living standards. Poorly managed refugee movements do the opposite in all respects.

THE CHANGE IN ENEMY STRATEGY

In 1964 the enemy attempted the classic shift from guerrilla warfare toward large unit action by which they hoped to knock over Saigon and the GVN. Local guerrillas were continually drawn away into the main forces. Throughout the Delta and wherever the VC infrastructure was strong, the VC, while engaged in troublemaking, allowed the population to live in a partial accommodation between the sides. Their main effort was devoted to the build-up in relatively isolated hinterland areas of NVA and main force units.

American strategy defeated this enemy effort. Search and destroy operations chewed up NVA and main force units, hit many base camps, and forced the enemy further into the hinterland. The increasing flow of NVA troops only partially compensated for the blows the main forces suffered. There is much evidence to testify to the favorable trend of events in 1966-67. Prisoner and defector interviews are consistent in reporting enemy difficulties and demoralization. The flow of hoi chanh (ralliers) increased dramatically. HES figures show a steady increase in the proportion of the population under government control. The elections were an astonishing success in political development. X

stagnate

After Tet one can question whether all of these indicators were illusions. They were not. The war was going well for us under the rules of the game then applying. The enemy knew it and was preparing a revised strategy. Many of us wondered for over a year why they kept up the futile game of main force combat. Many Americans asked why weren't they smart enough to drop back to local guerrilla action where they would have us stymied. We should have known better than to underestimate their intelligence. They were laying the groundwork for doing it in a much more effective and aggressive way that would be an advance not a retreat. For about six months there were signs of the preparations for a change, but I for one, and most Americans, failed to put the pieces together. There was the major build-up in numbers of guerrillas while the numbers of the main forces stood still, or finally declined. There was the spread of more modern weapons to lower units, e.g., the AK 47, recoilless rifles, and larger mines. There was the appearance of some NVA in lower units to stiffen them. Then there was the sudden unexplained drop in hoi chanh which in retrospect we must assume was because the ranks in the VC began to recognize that their units were being better armed and strengthened, and that things from their viewpoint were looking up. why?

Drawing us to borders

why?

What is the new strategy, so skillfully launched last Tet? Its basic feature is a return of the main VC effort to the populated countryside. But it consists of several parts.

1. Protect main force and NVA units by taking maximum advantage of the sanctuary provided by frontiers. Draw as many American forces as possible to the frontier, tied down by feints across the frontier. With luck, destroy some such isolated American unit in a dramatic victory sometime, but where and when chance factors will determine.
2. Draw ARVN and other American units from the countryside by repeated and varied attacks on the cities. If lucky take over a city temporarily; at next best have it damaged or disrupted by the counterattack, and at least keep allied troops from the countryside.
3. Put the major emphasis on well-armed guerrilla units small enough to be concealed in well populated non-jungle areas. By repeated attacks make the countryside untenable. This implies no longer trying to win the populace by organization as much as by fear. Having failed to convert the people, they will pull out all stops against GVN presence even at the cost of severe loss of popularity. ?!

I have no basis for suggesting the means to provide enough mobility in frontier defense to avoid having one outpost after another threatened. I can comment on the problem of the village guerrilla and local forces.

It will be increasingly difficult to conduct pacification efforts in scattered hamlets. Aggressive guerrillas with recoilless rifles, AK 47's and rockets can punish GVN villages at will. Reasonable security will require that the hamlets in an area co-operate in a network to spot the enemy when he enters an area; that each react to him with local self-defense forces backed in case of need by ARVN units on the ground.

The matter of aggressive local self-defense units is discussed in a memo on the PF.

Area solidity among the hamlets is discussed in memos on councils of village chiefs and on coping with VC hamlets.

ATTACHMENT #7

Description of the Research Mentioned Above

THE SIMULMATICS CORPORATION

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February 1968

SIMULMATICS EFFORTS IN VIET NAM

In June, 1966, the first of several Simulmatics research teams arrived in Viet Nam. In the paragraphs which follow we describe briefly the seven main studies done and their achievements.

The first study dealt with the Chieu Hoi or Open Arms Program for Viet Cong ralliers. It was directed by Professor Ithiel de Sola Pool of M.I.T. and sponsored by ARPA (the Advanced Research Projects Agency of the Department of Defense). Its object was to make the Chieu Hoi Program more effective by determining the reasons why the Viet Cong attracted certain individuals, why these individuals later rallied, and how such ralliers could best be reabsorbed into Vietnamese society. Chieu Hoi reception centers were observed and several hundred interviews of varying lengths--including 84 intensive interviews--were conducted and the results analyzed. The final report, reviewed favorably by the chief American advisors to the program, was published in September, 1967, and a substantial portion of the recommendations contained therein have been acted upon. In particular, as a result of our recommendations a medical program was quickly established in the Chieu Hoi centers to treat Viet Cong ralliers. In certain other instances, changes in the handling of ralliers, in the advance planning of Chieu Hoi leaflet material, and in the tone and approach of this material were made as a direct result of the team's recommendations.

A second project for ARPA by the Simulmatics Corporation in Viet Nam, led by Professor Philip Worchel (presently the Deputy Science Advisor for the social sciences in MAC-V, Saigon), undertook to enhance the effectiveness of Regional and Popular Forces, commonly referred to as RF/PF, by investigating the needs, aspirations, frustrations, and values of the troops composing these forces. A total of almost 1300 subjects were interviewed, including over seven hundred troops of both effective and ineffective RF/PF squads, as well as their wives and fellow-villagers. The reliability of these original interviews was then checked by means of a second series of interviews three months later and these results

"cross-validated" with untested RF/PF units and villagers. The results of this study allowed the researchers to determine those factors whose presence or absence altered the level of effectiveness of RF/PF squads. The recommendations based on the recognition of these factors were favorably reviewed and forwarded to the various appropriate agencies for their action.

Another project had as its objective the improvement of the method of evaluating the combat effectiveness of Vietnamese military units. This study, also ARPA sponsored, was led by Dr. Frederick Rockett. The strengths and weaknesses of the Senior Advisors' Monthly Evaluation (SAME) report were analyzed, new indicators of the combat effectiveness of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Viet Nam were developed, and a new method of evaluating effectiveness--the Simulmatics-designed SEER reporting system--was recommended and put into operation to replace the previously existing system.

A fourth project, begun in August, 1967, is to assess the reliability of data received from American advisors in rural areas regarding the progress of pacification. The final report containing the findings of the study as well as recommendations to improve the reliability of reported data, has just been submitted to the sponsoring organization, ACTIV (the Army Concepts Team in Viet Nam).

In a fifth project, Simulmatics research has been used to identify aspects of Vietnamese culture and tradition which had aided authorities in improving communications with the Vietnamese population. The work of this team was considered sufficiently valuable by the Advanced Research Projects Agency to have its activity continued beyond the original termination date. In addition, the Simulmatics research team also provided some secretariat staffing for a psychological warfare panel established by the military command in Viet Nam.

A sixth project was designed to ascertain what effects, if any, the recent revolution in public communications caused by the introduction on a large scale of television and radio will have on the information, behavior and attitudes of the Vietnamese population and, in particular, to what extent these media might serve to reduce political dissidence and turbulence. Professors Ithiel de Sola Pool of M.I.T. and Ralph White of George Washington University led this study. A three wave field panel survey was planned to examine the rural areas before, immediately after, and six months after the introduction of television. Each wave of the study was to be composed of

approximately 750 interviews conducted in about 100 villages. The first wave interviews have been completed and the results are now being analyzed for ARPA and the Joint U.S. Public Affairs Office. Unfortunately, the two additional waves which were to follow the first wave interviews have been cancelled and no further effort is contemplated for the moment.

The seventh Simulmatics project is a study of various special groupings within the Vietnamese population. The information may serve to help mobilize these groups on behalf of the war effort and of national reconstruction. The study evaluates methodology for the study of such groups, as well as compiling information on Vietnamese social structure, motivation and conditions of entrepreneurship. It was led by Professor Pool and included such eminent participants as Professor Arthur Smithies of Harvard University, Professor John Donnell of Temple University, Professor Milton Sacks of Brandeis University, and Professor Frederick Yu of Columbia University. The population groups studied included the students, the labor movement (a significant anti-communist influence in Viet Nam), the Chinese community of approximately one and one-half million people, the Hoa Hao (a religious sect which has successfully checked communism in the provinces under its control), and the entrepreneurial class, including those members found in small towns as well as in metropolitan areas. This last sub-study on provincial entrepreneurs was considered so useful by AID officials that it is now being continued under AID auspices. The final reports of the overall project are being submitted to ARPA by March 1968.

In the Tet crisis the Simulmatics field team demonstrated its "quick response" capability by doing immediate interviews to assess the psychological impact of the attack on Saigon. Simulmatics expects to continue providing knowledge on the basis of which policy planning can be more intelligently conducted.